

# **Operation Onward Liberty**

Last updated October 2012

#### **Overview**

Operation Onward Liberty (OOL) is a U.S. military-led team who mentor and advise the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in order to develop a national military that is responsible, operationally capable, respectful of civilian authority and the rule of law, and is a force for good among the Liberian people. OOL's goal is to assist the AFL in building a professional and capable military force that can effectively provide and contribute to the overall security environment in Liberia.

## **Background**

The 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that brought an end to the Liberian civil war called for the United States to lead the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). After consultations with Liberian authorities, a program

was put in place that led to the complete rebuilding of the army from the ground up. Principally executed by U.S. Government-funded contractors, along with a small number of U.S. military personnel, the initial effort led by the U.S. State Department, 2005-2009, involved demobilizing the old AFL, rehabilitating three military bases, then recruiting, vetting, training and equipping a new AFL of about 2,000 men and women from across the country. After the contractors departed and the Government of Liberia assumed operational control of the AFL, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), through U.S. Marine Corps Forces Africa (MARFORAF), established OOL to provide U.S. military personnel to assist with the mentorship and training of the AFL.

## **Facts and Figures**

OOL currently has approximately 50 personnel assigned, currently comprised of military members from the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Army's Michigan National Guard and the U.S. Air Force, and



An Operation Onward Liberty mentor provides advice to Armed Forces of Liberia soldiers during Exercise Watch Over II near Teh, Liberia on May 30, 2012.

vary in rank. OOL team members fulfill deployment taskings of anywhere between six and 12 months. The main goal of each team member is to serve as a mentor/advisor to a counterpart (or counterparts) within the AFL chain of command.

For the AFL itself, the current organization consists of an Infantry Brigade, Coast Guard, Logistics Command, an Armed Forces Training Command and a headquarters element. The projected operational end strength is roughly 2,000 soldiers and Coast Guardsmen. The AFL hopes to establish a robust recruiting, vetting and separation policy to ensure its ranks are constantly being supplied with new, eager soldiers as well as experienced commissioned and noncommissioned officers who are able to lead effectively.

## **Impact**

"Our goal here is to help the AFL continue to rebuild and establish themselves as a professional army," said Colonel Vernon Graham, Operation Onward Liberty officer in charge. "Gaining public trust and showing the Liberian citizens the AFL is truly a force for good will take time; however, I am confident in their abilities and our progress."

### **More Sources**

U.S. Military Joint-Service Team Steps Up for Operation Onward Liberty 2011

**U.S. Marine Corps Forces Africa**